

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESS WORKING GROUP

Meeting 1: Identify Key Characteristics of Chronic Homeless

MEETING SUMMARY

July 17, 2003

Welcome and Member Introductions

Commissioner Goodno, Commissioner Fabian and Commissioner Marx welcomed the members of the working group.

Commissioner Goodno thanked Working Group Members for their commitment to an issue that is a priority for the governor. He stated that supportive housing is an issue we need to deal with, we need to recognize that a lot of prior work has been done, but that this will not be an easy process with one solution. To serve people with multiple barriers, the different agencies must work together to move forward in trying to address solutions.

Commissioner Fabian expressed that this is an excellent opportunity to review the supportive housing work already done, bring recommendations together and move forward.

Commissioner Marx thanked Working Group Members for their willingness to participate in developing a business plan to reduce long-term homelessness as the legislature has called on us to do. He stated that the scope of problem is manageable. We can't solve all problems with this group, we are not trying to address the entire homeless situation, but we will be able to focus on individuals and families that experience long-term homelessness, their characteristics and their needs, to develop a system that will support them. We will identify the right issues to achieve success.

Members also made introductions.

Working Group Orientation

Commissioner Marx reviewed the legislation and the expected goals and outcomes of the Working Group to "propose a formal, interagency decision-making process and a plan to fund supportive housing proposals" in order to reduce the number of Minnesota individuals and families that experience long-term homelessness, reduce system costs and improve social outcomes. This first meeting will focus on identifying the key characteristics of people chronically experiencing homelessness; the second meeting on models of supportive housing, best practices, and available resources; the third on gaps in resources and barriers to filling the gaps in capital, operating, and services funding; the fourth on the interagency decision making process; and the

fifth on the criteria, plan and timetable for funding. The Working Group will review the report to the legislature that is due by February 14, 2004.

Janel Bush, Department of Human Services, summarized previous supportive housing efforts.

Review of County-State Supportive Housing Working Group

Ramsey County Commissioner Sue Haigh and Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman summarized supportive housing work done by counties. Commissioner Haigh related information on the group of county-state officials convened last year on supportive housing. The group issued a policy statement including a brief overview of the problem and defining supportive housing. Commissioner Haigh stated that supportive housing is important in reducing costs for public systems, improving outcomes, reducing out of home placement costs, increasing effectiveness of services provided, and achieving the ultimate goals of housing stability for families and individuals. One of the key issues is how to develop way to pay for coordinated services, how to have financing plan for services developed at same time capital plan is developed.

Review of Proposed Characteristics

Commissioner Marx directed Working Group Members to the principle purpose of the meeting: to identify key characteristics of persons experiencing chronic homelessness, focusing on long-term homeless, not on the entire homeless population. Cherie Shoquist reviewed the document "Key Characteristics of Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness." In addition to looking at other federal, state, local policies, agency staff consulted the 2001 Wilder Study on homeless, and held in-depth discussions with stakeholders, shelter and street outreach service providers, the Coalition for the Homeless, Metro-wide Engagement on Shelter and Housing, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and others. The most prevalent characteristics are chemical and mental health problems. We will request data accurately reflecting the characteristics defined by this group in new Wilder Survey, which will take place this fall. Preliminarily, Wilder estimated that between 2800 and 3600 individuals are chronically homeless each year.

Working Consensus on the Target Population

The Working Group discussed the target population. Working Group Members stated that it is important to consider other characteristics in addition to mental illness and chemical dependency, due the fact that not all mental illness or chemical dependency is reported or diagnosed and to alleviate concerns that people who experience long-term homelessness without mental illness or chemical dependency will not be able to access housing and services. The term "lacking a permanent place to live" was suggested to better define homelessness because it is difficult to document the absence of housing status.

The Working Group identified the target population as: "An individual or adult family member with: mental illness, chemical dependency, or co-occurring mental illness and chemical dependency; chronic health conditions (including HIV / AIDS); domestic violence, abuse or

neglect; cognitive limitations; or criminal history who has either lacked a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more, or has lacked a permanent place to live at least four times in the past three years, or prior to any incarceration or institutionalization.

Solicit Criteria and Ideas for Models to Consider

Mari Moen, Corporation for Supportive Housing, agreed to put together a document on settings and models and Jennifer Ho, Hearth Connections, agreed to review services best practices in preparation for the next meeting. Several members and stakeholders agreed to join them. Commissioner Marx thanked members for participating.